Integrating Mobile Technology Into a Health Professions Curriculum: Using Flexible Technology to Meet Expectations

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Abstract

The diverse needs of students, faculty, administrators, and the curriculum itself, create formidable challenges when attempting to integrate mobile technology into a health professions curriculum. Single technology solutions often fail in this environment because they cannot meet user needs. Multiple platform and device agnostic solutions can provide the flexibility to address curricular needs without significantly adding technological complexity.

Summary of Poster

One of the most common problems that must be overcome in order to successfully integrate information technology into a complex health professions curriculum is the myriad of needs from the various users and stakeholders. PDA-based solutions, for example, require students and faculty to purchase PDAs and the issue of standardization immediately arises. If multiple PDA platforms are accommodated there will always be issues related to technology failure or short-term use by guests and visiting students. In addition, individual applications may not meet the needs of all students, faculty, or courses.

In the development of an integrated mobile technology model at the University of Cincinnati many of these hurdles were identified early and a flexible model was developed to accommodate a wide range of user needs. The applications were designed to be open-ended to allow faculty and administrators to customize them to their needs. The applications were also developed to be both web and PDA-based so that all students, faculty and administrators could access and use them in an environment in which they are most comfortable. The applications are device-agnostic and allow both faculty and students to choose a PDA that meets their needs. The final applications and design provide greater acceptance and use by the wide range of users and has made it easier to implement new applications. Users can take advantage of several existing technologies to access the applications and can adapt their use of the applications to new technologies or devices that they may purchase or use in the future. This application and technology model provides the institution with wide flexibility to modify systems and to make curricular changes without nullifying the utility of either the technology or the applications that have been developed.